WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vehicle key system for verifying identity of fingerprint information about a user's fingerprint and for controlling pieces of equipment in a vehicle according to a verification result, said system comprising:

a fingerprint information capturing means for capturing fingerprint information from a user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint information storage means for pre-storing at least a piece of fingerprint information about an authorized user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint verification means for verifying identity of the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint information capturing means by comparing it with the authorized user's fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means;

a fingerprint information processing means for performing a plurality of processes on the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint information capturing means in a plurality of processing modes, respectively;

a manipulation detection means for detecting at least one of a predetermined manipulation of an operation unit for controlling the pieces of equipment in the vehicle and a predetermined manipulation of a pedal; and

a processing mode switching means for switching between the plurality of processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

2. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein

~~said plurality of processing modes include a first processing~~ mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

3. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

4. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle without verification of the ~~identity of the user's~~

fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

5. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, a third processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and a fourth processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first processing mode and either one of the second, third, and fourth processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

6. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said operation unit is a wiper switch, a winker switch, or a shift lever, and said pedal is an acceleration pedal, a brake pedal, or a clutch pedal.

7. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said operation unit is a one intended for manipulating a

navigation unit for providing a variety of navigation services for users.

8. A vehicle key system for verifying identity of fingerprint information about a user's fingerprint and for controlling pieces of equipment in a vehicle according to a verification result, said system comprising:

a fingerprint information capturing means for capturing fingerprint information from a user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint information storage means for pre-storing at least a piece of fingerprint information about an authorized user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint verification means for verifying identity of the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint information capturing means by comparing it with the authorized user's fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means;

a fingerprint information processing means for performing a plurality of processes on the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint information capturing means in a plurality of processing modes, respectively;

a connecting means for connecting said system with a given external unit;

a manipulation detection means for detecting a signal applied thereto via said connecting means, said signal indicating a predetermined manipulation of said external unit; and

a processing mode switching means for switching between the plurality of processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

9. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

10. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

11. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second

processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

12. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, a third processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and a fourth processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first processing mode and either one of the second, third, and fourth processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.